

Easter Grain Pie ~ Pizza Grana

To Prepare Wheat Grain

Soak 1/4 pound wheat in cold water for 2 - 3 days, changing the water at least three times daily. When soaked, strain the water out and place grain into a saucepan and add milk to cover, about two inches above. Simmer slowly for 1 hour and add milk as needed, stir occasionally. Taste a little grain and see if it is tender, before you add 1/4 pound unsalted butter and 2 1/4 cups sugar. Stir gently and blend well. Set aside. Cool.

Pie Crust - for about 3 pies

4 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
4 1/2 large, cold, eggs, slightly beaten
9 ounces cold unsalted butter
3 ounces Confectioners' sugar
Grated rind of one large lemon

Sift flour and sugar; blend in butter with finger tips of pastry blender or food processor. Add lemon zest; make a well; add the eggs. Work the eggs into the dough, and it clears the bowl. Turn on a lightly floured

board and divide into three balls. Weigh the dough; to be sure the dough is all the same size. Shape balls into hamburger shape and place on a lightly floured piece of plastic wrap. Wrap well and chill in the refrigerator for at least an hour.

Pastry Cream for a yield of 2 1/2 cups

2 cups whole milk
6 large egg yolks
2/3 cup strained sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla
1/2 cup of flour, lightly measured and leveled

Bring the milk to a boil. If using a vanilla bean, split and scrape the seeds into the milk, and add the pod.

It is to do this step an hour before, and let it steep for more flavor.

Bring back to the boil before making pastry cream.

In an electric mixer – or - by hand with a whisk, place the yolks, sugar, and vanilla extract (if using) and beat with wire whisk, until it forms a ribbon; this should take 4 minutes.

Add the flour and whisk in well. Pour the yolk mixture into the remaining milk, mixing as you go along. Bring to the boil with the vanilla bean if using} stirring constantly with a heat proof rubber spatula or whisk. The pastry cream will thicken as soon as it reaches the boiling point.

Reduce heat and cook for a minute or so, stirring constantly to avoid scorching.

Strain pastry cream. Rub with a lump of butter and place a piece of plastic wrap on top of the pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming.

Place in refrigerator to cool.

Ingredients for Filling

3 pounds whole milk ricotta (drained overnight in rinsed cheesecloth in a strainer over a bowl .

1/4 pound citron - Slice the citron paper thin and chop fine.

1/2 cup orange zest, minced

2 full tablespoons, best quality pure vanilla

1 cup heavy cream, whipped to a soft peak

3 tablespoons orange juice, squeezed and strained

10 extra-large eggs beaten

3/4 ounce Anisette and Grand Marnier to taste

2 1/2 cups prepared Pastry Cream

With a flat beater, beat drained ricotta until creamy. Add slightly beaten eggs and continue beating until very creamy. Stir in prepared grain, citron, orange zest, and blend. Add vanilla, Anisette, Grand Marnier to taste ,and orange juice and blend. Fold in pastry cream and whipped cream.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Make the Pies

I prefer cake pans, 8 or 9 inch by 2 inches high. They can be round or rectangle.

It gives you more filling then in a pie pan.

Roll pastry out on a lightly floured pastry board or Silpat. Dough should be rolled 1/8 inch thick, roll on to rolling pin and unroll into pans, leaving about a 2 inch overhang, do not trim until after you have filled the pie. Do not stretch the pastry.

Pour filling into pastry lined pan. Do not be afraid to add filling right to the top. Trim edges !
If you want to make a flute, leave more pastry. The flute will sink into the filling while baking.

Bake until filling *is* firm in center. Test with a thin metal spatula; it must come out clean. Just like testing a quiche. Crust should be nicely browned. Start checking after 40 minutes or so.
It will vary according to the size of the pan.

Chef Note: Pies can be made any size you like. Cool completely and freeze if you like.